

CUSTODY, BUT NO CARE:
A REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S
EXPERIENCES
IN MDHS CUSTODY

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X. Recommendations

The following actions are recommended to immediately address the documented ongoing harms to children in MDHS custody.

Emergency actions needed:

- Every child in MDHS custody should *immediately* be provided face-to-face contact with independent professionals to determine his or her safety as well as to identify the immediate need for the child to be provided physical, dental, and psychological evaluations.
- The placement history of every child in MDHS custody should *immediately* be reviewed by independent professionals to determine whether the child's current placement provides the level of care appropriate to meet the child's basic and special needs, and, if not, to identify the steps needed to determine the type of placement needed and to achieve an appropriate placement for the child.
- All MDHS staff involved in face-to-face contact monitoring children's safety and well-being while in custody should *immediately* be provided training that specifically addresses communicating with, interviewing, and observing foster children.

Immediate actions needed:

Mechanisms are clearly needed to assure statewide compliance with federal and state policy and to assure that counties conduct ongoing reviews of children's safety, placement services, and progress toward permanence.

Statewide and County Mechanisms should be developed to:

- Monitor all placement changes for infants and children 5 and under, including changes to and from emergency placements.
- Monitor the use of emergency placements for all children and develop plans to decrease over-use of emergency placements at children's entry into custody as well as throughout children's stays in custody.
- Review the frequent use of time-limited assessment and treatment placement programs for children and determine 1) the degree to which the use of these time limited placements creates "revolving door" placement